The Honorable Sue W. Kelly

U.S. Representative of New York (1995–2007)

Oral History Interview
Final Edited Transcript

June 23, 2016

Office of the Historian
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

"But when I was in Congress, it was men. And the men were treated with great deference, especially by the other men. The women, they had nothing to lose by challenging leadership, nothing at all to lose by challenging the leadership and saying, 'We think this should be done. Let's get it done.' Or, 'We think this is wrong. Let's don't do it.' I've watched women manipulate the situation in a way where they just got stuff done."

The Honorable Sue W. Kelly
June 23, 2016

Table of Contents

Abstract

Sue W. Kelly made the transition from a behind-the scenes campaign worker to a candidate for Congress in 1994 when incumbent Representative Hamilton Fish, Jr., of New York declined to seek re-election. In her oral history, Kelly speaks of her familiarity with the district as a longtime resident, small business owner, and volunteer for Congressman Fish.

As part of the freshman class that helped Republicans take the majority in the House for the first time in 40 years, Kelly reflects on the many opportunities afforded to new Members, such as plum committee assignments and placement on influential investigative groups. In her interview, Kelly observes that Speaker Newt Gingrich of Georgia supported women Representatives, providing chances for advancement within the party and in the institution. Kelly also describes how women on both sides of the aisle worked together to promote legislation like the Violence Against Women Act. Kelly's oral history offers a unique look at the majority whip operation as House Republicans sought to implement the centerpiece of their successful campaign to retake the House, the "Contract with America." Kelly also offers a comparison of the leadership style of the two Speakers she worked with during her six terms in office—Gingrich and J. Dennis Hastert of Illinois—as well as poignant memories of representing a New York district after the September 11, 2001, attacks against the United States.

Biography

KELLY, Sue W., a Representative from New York; born in Lima, Allen County, Ohio, September 26, 1936; graduated from Lima Central High School, Lima, Ohio; B.A., Denison University, Granville, Ohio, 1958; M.A., Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, N.Y., 1985; biomedical researcher, Boston City Hospital, Boston, Mass., and New England Institute for Medical Research; teacher; staff for United States Representative Hamilton Fish of New York; patient advocate, emergency room, St. Luke's Hospital, N.Y.; adjunct professor, Graduate Program in Health Advocacy, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, N.Y.; certified New York ombudsman for nursing homes; member, New York Republican family committee; elected as a Republican to the One Hundred Fourth and to the five succeeding Congresses (January 3, 1995–January 3, 2007); unsuccessful candidate for reelection to the One Hundred Tenth Congress in 2006.
Read full biography

Editing Practices

In preparing interview transcripts for publication, the editors sought to balance several priorities:

- As a primary rule, the editors aimed for fidelity to the spoken word and the conversational style in accord with generally accepted oral history practices.
- The editors made minor editorial changes to the transcripts in instances where they believed such changes would make interviews more accessible to readers. For instance, excessive false starts and filler words were removed when they did not materially affect the meaning of the ideas expressed by the interviewee.
- In accord with standard oral history practices, interviewees were allowed to review their transcripts, although they were encouraged to avoid making substantial editorial revisions and deletions that would change the conversational style of the transcripts or the ideas expressed therein.
- The editors welcomed additional notes, comments, or written observations that the interviewees wished to insert into the record and noted any substantial changes or redactions to the transcript.
- Copy-editing of the transcripts was based on the standards set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

The first reference to a Member of Congress (House or Senate) is underlined in the oral history transcript. For more information about individuals who served in the House or Senate, please refer to the online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, http://bioguide.congress.gov and the "People Search" section of the History, Art & Archives website, http://history.house.gov.

For more information about the U.S. House of Representatives oral history program contact the Office of House Historian at (202) 226-1300, or via email at history@mail.house.gov.

Citation Information

When citing this oral history interview, please use the format below:
"The Honorable Sue W. Kelly Oral History Interview," Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives (23 June 2016).

Interviewer Biographies

Matt Wasniewski is the Historian of the U.S. House of Representatives, a position he has held since 2010. He has worked in the House as a historical editor and manager since 2002. Matt served as the editor-in-chief of *Women in Congress, 1917–2006* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), *Black Americans in Congress, 1870–2007* (GPO, 2008), and the *Hispanic Americans in Congress, 1822–2012* (GPO, forthcoming 2013). He helped to create the House's first oral history program, focusing on collecting the institutional memory of current and former Members, longtime staff, and support personnel. He earned his Ph.D. in U.S. history from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 2004. His prior work experience includes several years as the associate historian and communications director at the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, and, in the early 1990s, as the sports editor for a northern Virginia newspaper.

Kathleen Johnson is the Manager of Oral History for the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives. She earned a B.A. in history from Columbia University, where she also played basketball for four years, and holds two master's degrees from North Carolina State University in education and public history. In 2004, she helped to create the House's first oral history program, focusing on collecting the institutional memory of Members and staff. She co-authored two books: *Women in Congress: 1917–2006* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006) and *Black Americans in Congress: 1870–2007* (GPO, 2008). Before joining the Office of the Historian, she worked as a high school history teacher and social studies curriculum consultant.

— THE HONORABLE SUE W. KELLY OF NEW YORK —
A CENTURY OF WOMEN IN CONGRESS

JOHNSON: My name is Kathleen Johnson. I'm here with Matthew Wasniewski, who is the Historian of the House of Representatives. The date is June 23rd, 2016. We're in the Rayburn House Recording Studio, and we are very happy to be interviewing former Congresswoman Sue [W.] Kelly of New York. Congresswoman Kelly, thank you for taking the time to speak with us [by phone] today.

KELLY: Thank you for interviewing me. I think it's a good project.

JOHNSON: Thank you. And this project that you just referenced is in honor of the 100th anniversary of Jeannette Rankin's election to Congress. She was the first woman elected to Congress. And to begin with today, we were wondering, when you were young, if you had any female role models.

KELLY: Female role models? Not when I was young. Probably not. I can't think of any woman I particularly looked up to, certainly not in politics.

JOHNSON: Was there anyone else, perhaps any men, that you looked up to, that you modeled yourself after at that time?

KELLY: Not when I was young. How young are we talking about? When I was in college, I was kind of interested in politics. But my interest in politics really came from the fact that Bob [Robert Alphonso] Taft was running for President against Dwight Eisenhower, at a convention. And our next-door neighbors and my parents were really concerned because I'm from Ohio, and we really wanted Bob Taft to become the next President. As we all know, he lost at the convention. But we watched that on a small black-and-white TV that my parents had, and the neighbors came over, and we all sat in the living

room and watched the convention with great passion. So if anything, I would say that it was that that probably sparked my interest in federal politics. I learned a lot by watching.

JOHNSON: Great. And what were the expectations about what your role in society would be as a woman?

KELLY: Oh. Well, you have to understand. I'm 80 years old. So back when I was growing up—when I was in high school, for instance, women, young girls were not allowed to take physics. We were allowed to take chemistry, but physics was considered too demanding for women in high school. When I went to college, there were 37 pages of rules for women and three pages of rules for men. Women were still objectified when I was growing up. The joke in college used to be to get married. A point of being in college for a lot of women was to get married, and the joke was "A ring by spring or your money back."

JOHNSON: What did you hope to do after you graduated college?

KELLY: I had no clue. But my sister had gone to Boston, so I went to Boston and interviewed and wound up doing blood research for Harvard at the same time getting a graduate degree in science. My father was a doctor. My mother was a pioneer in her own right. She had the equivalent of a master's degree from the only master's degree program in dietetics that was available in the U.S., and that was at Columbia University. So she was—if anything, my mother was perhaps—gave me and my sister the role model of just being strong women and caring about going forward in society, I guess.

WASNIEWSKI: You mentioned that 1952 convention sparking your interest in federal politics.

KELLY: Yes.

WASNIEWSKI: We're wondering if you can talk a little bit about your political involvement and experience prior to coming to Congress. When did that really start for you?

KELLY: Well, in 1954, a friend of mine was running to be president of our class, and I remember that I watched her make a speech and then went up to her afterward and said, "Let me work with you because you've got to try to convince people to vote for you. Here are some things I think we ought to do." So she and I rehearsed, and I basically was her campaign manager.

I went to Denison University. It's not a very big school. But it was an interesting thing to do, to be her campaign manager. And then after I married—I married into a family that was very political here in New York. My husband's family, for 154 years, were the supervisors of the town of Bedford in New York. They were very interested in politics. My husband wasn't particularly, but they were. I represented, when I went to Congress, the only other end of the family that had ever been in Congress from Katonah, New York. My husband's grand-uncle was William Henry Robertson, and if you know anything about politics back in the middle/late-1800s, you would follow—his name is mentioned as a Congressman, and then after helping [James Abram] Garfield become President, he became the chairman of the Port Authority in New York, which at that time was a very powerful position.

So they talked politics a lot, and then eventually my husband became the GOP chairman of the town of Bedford. And after that Hamilton Fish, [Jr.], appeared in our living room. We had known him socially, but he was

running for Congress. And so when he was redistricted into this area, we gave him a fundraiser, and he came here several times. At one point, then he asked if I would become his campaign manager here. And that resulted in a man named Neil Newhouse, who is well known in D.C.—he was then a person working with the NRCC [National Republican Congressional Committee], who came up to hold a three-day training conference for political people here at our house. Neil came and spent three days—he slept here, and we went from morning to night. People came to my house, and we went through the day for three days—he was training us how to run a political campaign.

WASNIEWSKI: In that whole process—and maybe you've already answered this with Neil—but was there anyone who served for you as an early political mentor?

KELLY: Well, John Barry, the chief of staff for Ham Fish. He was an irascible guy. But he was also a very good politician. And between Neil and John Barry, I learned a lot {laughter} about politics.

JOHNSON: What motivated you to run for the House in '94 and to make that transition of working on campaigns to actually running your own campaign?

KELLY: I got angry at the GOP. My husband was a delegate to the '76 [presidential] convention, and I went there as a reporter for the local news. And it was the last contested convention we've had until possibly this one that's coming up right now in 2016. So that was an interesting period of time. But after that, we both felt that the Republican Party had veered off into an odd direction, and we were not very active.

And then I looked—when Hamilton Fish got sick and had to leave Congress—I looked at the people running, and I was really pretty angry at what was happening because Ham had not designated any one person to be his follow-up to run for Congress.[1]

His own son decided he would run on the Democrat ticket so it was an open-seat race. There were four Democrats and one woman Libertarian and six men on the GOP line running. And it really bothered me. I didn't feel the GOP was going in the right direction anyway, and I was really upset that it seemed to me that Ham Fish had set up the election in such a way by not endorsing any one candidate. I thought he'd set the election up so his son would take over, and his son was a liberal Democrat whom I had known, obviously, since—I'd known him for at least 24 years because I had been working with Ham. I was Ham's district director, temporarily, until he could find someone after he was elected in my district. So, I was very close to Ham and his staff, and I just got angry at the GOP because it seemed to me that they had not put together any one person to replace him.

And it was an interesting group of the men I ran against. I jumped into the primary. It bothered me so much, I couldn't sleep. I kept trying to get my husband, to talk him into running. Finally, at one point he said, "Look, if you care so much, why don't you put your money where your mouth is and run?" So I did. My mom and dad—my mom had died; my dad had died before that. I had a small amount of money that I inherited. I had $150,000. And I thought, "Well, I don't know what my parents would think about it, but I am going to run." I ran against a Congressional Medal of Honor winner, a brigadier general, the state GOP attorney, a sitting state assemblyman, a Vietnam veteran, and a former two-term Congressman that both Newt [Newton Leroy] Gingrich and Dick [Richard Keith] Armey and "B1" Bob [Robert Kenneth] Dornan, actually, they were all backing and putting money into that man's race. And I won.

JOHNSON: So this was your own volition. No one recruited you to run.

KELLY: No one recruited me at all. I was totally an outsider. But I knew enough about politics, and I thought we ordinary people in the GOP were getting sold down the river.

JOHNSON: You mentioned all of the male opponents that you had. How important of an issue was gender for you in this first campaign?

KELLY: Well, I think gender did play a role in that. At one point, I overheard someone, after I had made a speech—and I was scared to death, I have to tell you. My hands were shaking every debate. I couldn't get a drink of water because I was afraid to pick up the glass, my hands were shaking so hard. It was very, very difficult. I am basically reticent in crowds. I'm not a person to push myself forward. I'm not a "hail-fellow-well-met" type of individual. But I cared passionately that I had good representation in Congress. And so I ran. And as I was leaving one of these debates, I overheard somebody say, "Well, that's it: Snow White and the Six Dwarfs."

JOHNSON: Were you able to use gender as an advantage at all to stand out in such a crowded race?

KELLY: {laughter} Well, I did not play the gender card at all. That wasn't my role. My role was to point out the fact that the people running against me had particular flaws and that their motive for running was different from mine. It was clear when we would all be on a stage. My motive for running was this passion about what was going on in D.C. Theirs was the—I hate to put it this way—the arrogance of self. They all wanted to be a Congressman. That would be pretty neat, you know? But I didn't care about the accolades of the office that would occur if you were a Congressperson. I cared about policy. And I cared about the district. I had set up and run my own real estate rehab business. I had a very checkered career. If you look back—I don't know what

you've looked at on my background. Have you looked at what I did before I went to Congress?

JOHNSON: Yes. A very diverse background.

KELLY: Yes. That played very well. That helped me enormously when I was in Congress because I'd had a view, a personal view, of so many different parts of business and professional life. But I never played the gender card. I didn't have to.

JOHNSON: That background that you just talked about, so that was something that you used to your advantage, kind of a real-world experience?

KELLY: Yes, I really—I did. I had lived in the district for 40-some years. I'd raised four children here. And I'd run a business, my rehab business. I'd bought and rehabbed buildings in all four of the counties that were then in the district. I knew people. And also, because of working for Hamilton Fish, I knew a lot of people that were in the GOP. Most of them had stepped back, out of the GOP, the day-to-day runnings of it, because they too were not terribly thrilled with the direction that the GOP was going. And so when I decided to run, I picked up the phone and called the people I knew in all four districts. That is something that I don't think the people I ran against had any understanding, any clue about. They didn't know because, they themselves, many of them didn't really live here. They didn't live in the district.

WASNIEWSKI: Can you describe any key moment or turning-point moment in your opinion that happened during either the primary or the general?

KELLY: Well, {laughter} it was a stunning thing to most people that I won the primary. You have to understand, there were four counties involved in this

race. Each county had picked one of their own. My own GOP town chairwoman was backing the Congressional Medal of Honor winner, who was a neighbor. He lived right down the road from me. The people in Dutchess County were backing their state assemblyman. The state GOP was backing their state attorney.

WASNIEWSKI: Right. So that was a shock for the establishment. But was there any point in the . . .

KELLY: I'll give you a quote from the night that I won the primary, and that is that in Dutchess County, as the numbers began to come in, toward the end of the night, there was a man in the back of the room—and this is hearsay, I wasn't there—but some person who called me was there and said, "This is what happened." She said, "There was a man in the back of the room who looked at the numbers and then shouted out, 'Who the hell is Sue Kelly? She's going to win this thing!'" Nobody thought I would. And, as a matter of fact, I wasn't sure.

That night I went to the movies. And when I came back, the whole of our front yard, all of the parking area where we park our cars—and there were satellite trucks from ABC, NBC, CBS. They were all here because everybody had figured it out. So when I drove up the driveway, they shouted, "Where have you been?" I said, "I went to the movies. {laughter} I did my job. Either I won, or I didn't. Did I win?" They all said, "Yes!" {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: So how did you make the transition to the general election? Did you get more support from the national party at that point?

KELLY: {laughter} The party donated $60,000. That's the only donation of money that the NRCC ever gave me, period, in that race. And they did it because Bill [L. William] Paxon and his wife, Susan Molinari, were from New York,

and Maria Cino from New York was the chairman of the NRCC. Those New Yorkers knew what a tough district it was, and they backed me. But did I get a lot of help and support? Yes. In one sense I did. They sent up a really great gal named Ashley Heyer, who they had trained in D.C., and she helped me run my general campaign. The Democrats had a primary with four people. I was running at that point in the general election against Hamilton Fish's son and the woman Libertarian, who had been defeated in the Democratic primary, and the former two-term U.S. Congressman, who was running on the right-to-life and conservative lines.

WASNIEWSKI: So, of course, this is the 1994 campaign. Did you run on the "Contract with America" platform?

KELLY: I did. But I knew the issues here because I lived here. And I'd done business in these counties. I knew what the issues were here. I knew what a lot of people cared about. It was our economy. Our economy had tanked here. IBM had restructured. They'd closed down one of the plants up in Fishkill and released a lot of people that were down here in the Yorktown Thomas Watson Research labs. The General Motors plant, that was then in Tarrytown, closed, and those jobs went to Mexico and Canada. So our economy was not good. When I ran, there were 14,700 jobs that had just disappeared. And I knew that because I held these rental properties. I knew what people were paying, and I saw things going south. Yes, I ran with the "Contract," and I signed with the "Contract," and look, I really didn't know what I was doing, but I didn't know that I didn't know what I was doing. {laughter} I ran anyway because I cared about the fact that I thought we could do something on the economy in Washington.

WASNIEWSKI: You mentioned earlier that you received some money from the national party, some support.

KELLY: Sixty thousand dollars.

WASNIEWSKI: We're wondering did any women's groups, local or national, support your campaign, and what was their involvement?

KELLY: Yes. That first race, both the primary and the general—I am passionately pro-choice. And the pro-choice community donated money and held fundraisers for me, both in D.C. and here. And then there was a women's organization that claimed to be bipartisan. Turns out they're not. I didn't know that. But they claimed they needed—apparently they needed to back a couple of Republican women, and they had two, out of all the Democrat women. They backed all the Democrat women, but there were two Republican women that they backed, and I was one. I can't remember which of us was the other.

JOHNSON: One question that we've been asking all of our interviewees is to describe their district in the early years, geographically and also demographically.

KELLY: The district is one of the most beautiful areas of the United States of America. It runs along the Hudson River. I represented the district when I first ran from the middle of the county seat, in White Plains in Westchester County, which ran all the way over to the river from Tarrytown, then ran straight up the river, up to Poughkeepsie, and ran over to the Connecticut border and ran up the Connecticut border to Amenia, New York. So it was basically a large oblong. In addition to that, there were four townships in Orange County across on the western side of the river that I represented.

One of them was New Windsor. I represented New Windsor, Cornwall, and—let's see, where else? To tell you the truth, I can't remember, because I ultimately wound up with the whole of Orange County in the redistricting. I did that area four years when I first ran, and then when they redistricted, Nita [M.] Lowey moved up all the way practically into my backyard.

{laughter} The district then ran from the Connecticut border all the way out across the Hudson to the Delaware River and the Pennsylvania border. As far as I know, it's the only district that crossed the entire state, and it still had Poughkeepsie and Newburgh rather, Beacon, and a lot of territory.

I inherited a great many black-dirt farmers. The black-dirt farmers are wonderful people. Black dirt is a jelly-like dirt that is so full of water that if you jump on it, and someone is standing next to you, they move up and down. And you can't build on it, but you can—it's very fertile, and you can grow crops on it. And Orange County has this huge area, the largest black-dirt area outside of Florida. And they grow a lot of truck-farm crops. So the district changed from the one I originally described to the one I just described.

JOHNSON: And you had mentioned that Hamilton Fish had previously represented this district, and his son ran against you, so this family had far-reaching political roots and were very well known. Was it a challenge for you to follow such a well-known name in your district, and how did you carve out your own identity?

KELLY: Well, honestly, I knew a couple of things about Ham because I knew him well. First of all, when he got sick, he very rarely came up to the district. He was based in D.C. And he'd been in a long time. Ham was in for 26 years, so he didn't really—people assumed he was up here because he would come up every once in a while. But he was living in D.C. And I knew that. So what I did to counter his son was, because his son—I don't think his son was based in New York. His son had not lived in the district. He grew up in D.C. and went to colleges not in this area.

So what I did was simply accept every invitation anybody gave me. I would get up in the morning, sometimes at 5:00 in the morning, and get in a car and drive out to Port Jervis, which is an hour and a half from this area—from where I live—and make a speech at 9:00 in the morning, have breakfast, and then zigzag all the way back across Orange County, going from one event to another. And I did that day after day after day. I went everywhere. I walked into every village in the district, and I shook hands and said to people, "I am Sue Kelly, and I'm running for Congress. And I'm a small businesswoman, just like you. I want your vote because I am going to represent we small businesspeople." I knew that Ham hadn't been in half those villages in years, and I was pretty sure his son wasn't going to be there either. So, I just worked. I won because I outworked everybody.

WASNIEWSKI: You mentioned earlier being nervous about giving speeches, but it sounds like you enjoyed that aspect of campaigning, getting out and meeting people. Is that a correct assumption?

KELLY: I'm sorry. Say that again?

WASNIEWSKI: You had mentioned earlier that making speeches made you a little bit nervous, but it sounds like, from how you just described going into the villages, that you enjoyed the process of campaigning and meeting people. Is that a correct assumption?

KELLY: I grew to enjoy it. I remember my . . . my family knows me best. And I remember walking down the street with one of my sons, who looked at me, and . . . after we were walking down the . . . and he looked at me and said—rather, he looked at his father. I'm sorry; Ed was with me. He said, "Dad, look at Mom. She goes up and talks to people she doesn't even know!" He couldn't believe it.

WASNIEWSKI: We're going to shift gears a little bit and talk about your arrival in the House. When you arrived in 1995, Republicans had just taken control of the chamber for the first time in four decades.

KELLY: {laughter} Oh, yes.

WASNIEWSKI: We're hoping we can get you to describe the atmosphere of the House at that point, and also was it for you—did you find it to be a welcoming environment for women Members of Congress in particular? There weren't too many at that point.

KELLY: No. In my class, when we were first elected, there were seven women. I don't want you to laugh when I say this. One of the great things about Newt Gingrich is he is not afraid of strong women. And he decided that since the Democrats had never, never, in 40 years, had a woman chairman of any committee—Pat [Patricia Scott] Schroeder had been, she had spent 26 years in Congress, and the highest she had risen was the vice chairmanship of a committee. So he decided he was going to help women get on good committees, and he was going to help us succeed. So he appointed Jan Meyers, a chairman—she had a full chairmanship of the Small Business Committee. Yes, it was Small Business, but on the other hand, that's the committee where she had seniority. And he made sure she was a full chairman. I think that was wonderful.

He appointed me to a couple of investigative groups. I sat in for—and for two or three years, we worked writing legislation, medical legislation, because I have a medical background. He appointed other people—Sue Myrick to a position. He did a lot to raise the visibility of Republican women in Congress. And there weren't that many of us.

JOHNSON: Did a special bond emerge with this group? Because you said that there were seven of you, seven freshman Republican women at the time.

KELLY: {laughter} Well, for some of them there was a bond. But you have to remember, some of them were . . . I'm a northeast, moderate, pro-choice woman. I was the only northeast, moderate, pro-choice woman in that class. There were two women that basically did not even want to talk to me for about two years. No, there was no special bond.

JOHNSON: Another question I just wanted to ask specifically about women: if there are any parts of the institution that were difficult for you to join or that were restricted because of your gender?

KELLY: I will tell you that what I really wanted, after two years and I was re-elected, that second term, I wanted to change. I wanted to get on the committees that I had background in. I wanted to get on the House—it was then Energy and Commerce, but it had all the medical stuff. And I wanted to get on that committee.

And the chairman of that at the time was a man from Virginia who was a good ol' boy. And when Newt Gingrich asked him to put me on the committee—once again one of his staffers wrote down what he said and then read it to me later. And what he said was, in a strong Southern accent, he said, "Like hell I'll put a northeast, moderate, pro-choice woman on my committee! Hell no!" That was it. I think he was mostly offended because I was a woman, more than anything else. There was no woman on his committee until Barbara [L.] Cubin eventually managed to—I think maybe her third term, Barbara managed to get on that committee. There were no women on that committee.

WASNIEWSKI: And just to get your general impressions of the early days of that 104th Congress [1995–1997], the atmosphere in the House, what do you recall about the passage of the "Contract" and that first hundred days?

KELLY: {laughter} Newt drove us all nuts! It was hard. We all got sick because we had no sleep, and we were eating horrible food, like cold pizza at 12:00 at night. It was really bad. I remember Amo [Amory] Houghton, [Jr.], standing up in conference and saying, "Newt, for God's sake, we've got to go home! We've got to get some sleep! We aren't functioning well." And Newt said, "It's the first hundred days."

We worked all night, one night. That night, I was so keyed up, I just couldn't sleep. That was in the first two years that I was there. That night I thought, "Well, I'll try to find a place to rest." I went into the ladies' locker room, so to speak, and there were people lying all over the floor. Every single sofa was full. There were a couple of beds in there that were occupied. And I thought, "There's all these ladies lying around on the floor, and there's no space, and so I'm going back to my office." I went back to my office, and there was really no place for me to lie down. My office was in the basement and small. I only had love seats, not full sofas. Those hard leather sofas are just awful. I couldn't sleep.

So I got up and started to walk. I walked into the Capitol Building and began to look at the beautiful paintings all over the ceilings, and I began to walk through one hall after another and read what was written on the ceilings, and had a marvelous time amusing myself, trying to get lost because I didn't know my way around the Capitol very well. I tried to get myself lost, and then I found secret passages and things that—I really had a lot of fun all night long.

And in the morning, because I was a Whip I went into Tom [Thomas Dale] DeLay's office, and he said, "We're hungry. We got to get breakfast." And I said, "Oh, what a great idea. I'm a good cook, and I know how to make massive amounts of things. If you open the kitchen, I'll scramble eggs for everybody." And he said, "Great!"

So we headed down to the kitchen, DeLay and a couple of staffers and I, laughing and talking, and we were stopped by the Capitol Police. They said, "You can't get in there." So DeLay sent out for Krispy Kreme doughnuts. His staffers went out to a Krispy Kreme place, and they came back with massive amounts of warm Krispy Kreme doughnuts. It was the first time I'd ever tasted a Krispy Kreme doughnut. I've been addicted ever since. We had no food. Finally, Newt allowed us to break. We had 45 minutes to go back, take a shower, change our clothes, and get back on the floor.

It was wild. It was a wild time. We were in conference right after we all were sworn in to office. There were a series of conferences, and at one—I don't know, it must have been sort of the end of January, first part of February—Dick Armey, Newt Gingrich, Tom DeLay, and John [Andrew] Boehner, and their staffs, came into the conference. They were a little late. And as they all came in, they were laughing. They said, "Wow. We have just taken a tour of the Capitol, and guess what we found?" There were places where for 40 years the Democrats would not allow the Republicans into certain areas of the Capitol. What they found was that lobbyists had offices under the Capitol Dome in hideaways. They also had parking places. And they, the Republicans, were kept out. That made Newt and company grumble because {laughter} some of the Republicans didn't have a parking place on Capitol Hill. So they were laughing because they'd found all these wonderful hideaways and gotten into places where they had not been allowed.

The atmosphere was one . . . it's hard to describe . . . of kids on a grand adventure. I hope those two vignettes will give you some kind of a flavor of what was going on. And in the meantime, we were trying to pass all this really serious legislation.

WASNIEWSKI: Those are great descriptions. Thank you. {laughter}

JOHNSON: You mentioned Tom DeLay and that you were one of the whips. Can you talk a little bit more about what that whip operation or the organization was like, especially during that period when it was so hectic, and there was so much going on?

KELLY: Well, I thank God that Tom allowed me to be a whip because it helped me be a much better legislator, that's the first thing. And the second thing is that everybody was kind of putting it together. There was this innocence about how to run the government, and everybody was trying to put it together so that things would flow smoothly. And, of course, because they had no experience, they were bound to make mistakes. And they did. And the perspective that I had from being a whip in Tom's office was it allowed me to understand and appreciate what was going on in a way that I never would have if I hadn't been there.

Tom's office was very relaxed. Denny [John Dennis] Hastert was his Deputy Whip, and we all got along with each other. We had a lot of laughs. Tom set the precedent for calling a whip meeting and at least giving everybody something to eat when we got there because we were all starving at that point. And it was something that . . . how can I describe it? Some of the staffers knew more about the operation of Capitol Hill than I wouldn't say Tom. Tom was pretty savvy. I think Tom in many ways was more savvy about how to operate on Capitol Hill than Newt was. Newt was a dynamo.

He had ideas, and he pushed hard, but I think Tom understood the politics of being in charge of Capitol Hill.

And one of the things . . . when they tried to overthrow Newt [as Speaker], I started to trust Tom. When they tried to overthrow Newt, I was not part of that. I stayed away from it. I didn't want to be a part of it. But at the conference, when Newt challenged everybody in the conference, and his own leadership, Tom DeLay stood up in that conference, and let me tell you, it was really emotional. Bill Paxon stood up and spoke. He was in tears. He said, "If you want my resignation, I was a big part of this. I admit this. And if you want my resignation, you have it." At that point Susan Molinari, his wife, said, "If Billy leaves, then I do too."

And then other people began to say, "I was involved. Newt, I'm sorry. I was involved, but here's why I think it's time you leave." At that point, in between each person standing up, there would be a time gap. People would sit quietly and look at each other, look around. Tom DeLay stood up and, again, in tears said, "And Newt, I am ashamed to say this, but yes, I was a part of this, too."

And then everybody looked at Dick Armey, and Dick Armey sat there and never, ever admitted. And Armey had a huge part in the whole thing. I have never respected the man since. But I did respect Tom. I still do. I got to like Tom a lot. He was funny, hardworking, and he said, "We're going to do this. We're going to stay in office. We have to figure out how to do this." And he just went ahead and played it by ear, but his ear was pretty attuned to politics.

WASNIEWSKI: We've heard much the same from a number of other folks and kind of the opposite impression that you might get from reading the press.

KELLY: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. The press—{laughter} I don't think the press really ever knew what was going on. But I was told by my wonderful first chief of staff—he had been the head of Pat [Charles Patrick] Roberts' minority office. Pat was the minority chairman on the Ag [Agriculture] Committee—Dennis Lambert was his name. And Dennis was a godsend, again, for me because I knew nothing. I thought I understood. I thought because I was up here in the district working with Ham, and I'd helped set up his offices, and I helped make . . . I was a surrogate speechmaker for him and did all kinds of things. And I was really focused on public policy. I thought I knew what was going on; I thought I knew what a Congressman's life was. I certainly did not. {laughter} If I'd known, I might not have run.

WASNIEWSKI: I just had a follow-up question about the whip operation. Were you recruited by DeLay's operation, or did you go to them and ask to be made a regional Whip?

KELLY: Well, once again, there they were with this huge freshman class. They didn't know what to do with us. They had to train us—we went to seminar after seminar before we actually took the Oath of Office. They had us hopping all over the East Coast, trying to teach us and train us to be Congress-people. And Tom, in the meantime, was trying to get votes. Bob [Robert Smith] Walker was a Congressman from Pennsylvania, and he was running. And I well remember Jennifer [Blackburn] Dunn saying to me, "You have to vote for Bob Walker. You're a moderate, and we have to get somebody in the leadership, so vote for Bob Walker. You're going to vote for Bob Walker." And I looked at her and thought, "Lady, don't tell me what to do, ever. I have a different district."

So I hung around, and finally I thought, "I have to make a decision. We have a vote on this in the next three days. I don't know what I'm going to do." I

had met with Bob Walker. I was not particularly impressed. So I had heard about DeLay, and I called his office and said, "I know you're running for Whip, and I don't know you, and you don't know me, and I'd like to come over and talk to you"—which was very bold on my part, and very uncharacteristic, but I was just deeply concerned about what to do. So I went over and talked to him. We had a nice conversation. He's a small businessman. I'm a small businesswoman. We had a lot in common.

So as I left, he said, "So, tell me, are you going to vote for me?" I said, "I guess you'll find that out when we vote, won't you?" And I was one of five votes that elected him. Tom had it narrowed down. He knew he could win, but I was one of five votes that he could not identify. And he knew that. So he called me after he won and said, "I want you on my team."

JOHNSON: Did he serve as a mentor to you? It certainly sounds like you're describing a close working relationship.

KELLY: We had a very good working relationship because, again, being from the northeast and my district being purple, not red or blue at that time, it was a tough district to hold for any Republican once Ham got out. And so, I would say, "Tom, I can't vote for this bill. I will replace my vote." And I would. I'd go find a Democrat and roll them because one of the things I did was promise myself I'd do my own homework. I didn't expect my staff to tell me what to do. So, in that sense I'm a pretty independent critter. I don't like people making up my mind for me. I want to do it myself. So I would read the legislation, and then I'd know more about the legislation, and I'd go to somebody and say, "Look. If you vote the Democrat line on this, then you're not going to do something that your district needs. Here's what your district actually needs. So you need to vote with us on this."

So when they would vote with the Republicans, and I would vote with the Democrats, and it was okay with Tom. He understood that. He understood that what it took to represent your individual district. He knew your district, that's what made him a good Whip. He understood everybody's district, and he knew what it took to hold those districts. Many people on Capitol Hill are so safe, and they're such pontificators that they don't realize what it takes to hold a moderate district. That's why there's so few moderates left.

JOHNSON: Before we move on any further, I just wanted to ask you about the freshman class that you had referenced. That was a very large class. There were 73 of you.

KELLY: Yes. {laughter} Seventy-two.

JOHNSON: What was your impression of the group, the demeanor and just your take on the class itself?

KELLY: We had a lot of fun. We were very cohesive. A lot of us are still in touch with each other. And we had a 20th class reunion not too long ago, and the whole bunch of us showed up. I was surprised. But we felt we were there with a mission. And our mission was to stop raising taxes, to use the money of the United States more wisely so that people would have jobs, and the economy would be stable, and we would stop paying such enormous interest on the national debt. Those are things that our class really cared passionately about.

WASNIEWSKI: Okay. We're going to shift gears a little bit, and just want to ask you a few questions about the Women's Caucus. You were the only freshman woman in '95 who joined the Women's Caucus. And we're just curious to know what went into making this decision for you, and did you receive any advice from other Members about that decision?

KELLY: No. I did not. I joined the Women's Caucus—well, I have to take that back. I may have forgotten. Nancy [Lee] Johnson and Connie [Constance A.] Morella were two women that actually reached out to me and helped me do a better job. They reached out, and they just simply said, "These are things you might consider." Connie and I still are in touch, and Nancy and I occasionally bump into each other. These were women who knew what they wanted to do, had a definite idea about how to go about legislating. They'd been there longer than I, and so I trusted them. And I might have gotten the impression from Connie that it would be a good thing for me to do.

WASNIEWSKI: What was the . . .

KELLY: The other thing is, I'm not a violently Republican woman. I'm not a hardcore sycophant of the Republican Party. I ran because I was angry with the party. And I think that may have had something to do with my joining because I've always been bipartisan in my outlook.

WASNIEWSKI: What was the response from constituents when you joined the caucus? Did you get any feedback?

KELLY: I don't think there was any response at all. People don't know, most people in the district—in any district—have very little information or understanding about what goes on in Washington, D.C. They think they do, but they truly don't.

JOHNSON: You had the opportunity to co-chair the Women's Caucus with Carolyn [Bosher] Maloney. How would you describe that experience?

KELLY: It was pretty interesting. Carolyn and I are both from New York, and we got along pretty well. Once again, I'm probably a very dull Jane here. I thought that Carolyn was really a lot of fun. We got along pretty well. And I think

that we did some interesting things. Carolyn had been in Congress a lot longer than I, and she knew how to use that position to do things that I never would have thought of.

For instance, we went over to the Middle East. We went to Qatar to monitor the first election that Qatar held that allowed women to vote. And that was all Carolyn's idea. So, we went. I thought, "Well, okay." I had read a great deal about the Middle East and about the history and so on. Both my parents were amateur archaeologists and had gone on digs in the Middle East, so I had kind of an in-depth understanding of it. So, I thought, "Well, why not?" And off we went.

Carolyn—she's still there, still doing her stuff. But the Women's Caucus was pretty funny. Look, I have a lot of funny stories, as you no doubt noticed, about being in Congress. I can tell you one about the Women's Caucus if you want to hear it.

JOHNSON: Sure.

WASNIEWSKI: Absolutely.

KELLY: Okay. When I took over as chairman, obviously I was chairman and Carolyn was co-, and so we decided we would meet with both Newt Gingrich and Dick [Richard Andrew] Gephardt. And I like Dick Gephardt. He's a nice guy. At any rate, we had the women. Dick was, at the time—basically his offices were in a hallway that had been sealed off to become his offices, because the office that he was in, that he was assigned by the Republicans, he didn't like. And so they sealed this thing off, and there Dick was in this hallway. It was a backdoor entrance to the ladies' room.

At any rate, he did have a conference room. We had everybody in there, all the ladies came in, and we were ready for Dick. I think there might have been—I don't even think Connie or Nancy were there . . . I think I was the only Republican in the room. At any rate, the Democrat women came in and started arguing about which chair they were going to sit at around this oval conference table. It was all I could do to keep from laughing out loud, because one would say, "Well, I was in Congress six months before you, so I get to sit closer." It was who got to sit closer to Dick. And it went on and on, and the arguing got worse and worse. And they would not sit down. I banged the gavel and said, "Ladies! Ladies!" And they made no attempt to stop. And as it got louder, Dick finally came in. I turned to him and said, "Dick, they're arguing about who gets to sit closest to you. They're your ladies. They will not listen to me and sit down. Perhaps you might try." He banged the gavel really hard and said, "Sit down." They did, instantly. I think that's funny. I don't know about you, but it strikes me as very funny.

WASNIEWSKI: No, it is very funny. One thing we didn't tell you upfront was we try not to speak over you or make sounds so we can pull the clips. That's a great story. Were there instances with the caucus that particularly stand out in your mind where you worked with women across the aisle on a particular issue affecting . . .

KELLY: Oh, I constantly was working with women across the aisle. There were all kinds of things that I did with the women. I didn't need the Women's Caucus to do that. We women decided to do certain things. And once in a while we would have a meeting. For instance, there were things about—I'm pro-abortion. I shouldn't say I'm pro-abortion. I believe a woman should be able to decide what to do in the event of a pregnancy. That's her decision. But at any rate, forgetting that, the proselytizing here—we were having a

meeting. And I think it might have been about that, or some aspect of the medical thing, the medical bills that we were then trying to pass. And this must have been about 1998, maybe 1999. I can't remember when I was chairman of the Women's Caucus, actually. I can't remember the dates. Do you know?

JOHNSON: The 106th Congress.

WASNIEWSKI: 1999 to 2001.

KELLY: Yes, okay. It was about 1999 when this happened. Anyway, we were all back in the ladies' room [Lindy Claiborne Boggs Congressional Women's Reading Room], which has this little living room area in it, and we were all sitting there talking about this legislation. We were called to a vote. And so Democrat and Republican women, we stood up and went out, and we—because the ladies' room is across Statuary Hall and through a locked door—we opened that door, walked across Statuary Hall, and walked down the main aisle of the House Floor to vote, because we were already on the second call of the—for voting. And as we walked down the aisle, a bunch of the men were sitting in chairs along the aisle, and I overheard one of them say, "Look at 'em! Look at 'em! What do you think they've been doing?" Again, I think that's really very funny. The men were threatened by the fact that we were meeting in a bipartisan way to talk about legislation.

WASNIEWSKI: That's a great story. {laughter} And we've heard maybe—I can't remember who it was, but we've heard very similar accounts about the men being worried about what was happening behind closed doors.

JOHNSON: And especially when they saw a group of women together.

KELLY: Yes. Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: The pro-choice/pro-life debate has always been a very important issue for women Members. How important was this to your own career and especially within your own party?

KELLY: Well, I think it held me back in, within my own party. I didn't care. The people I represented basically are marginally pro-choice. But I think this whole thing is a very personal decision for people. I don't think the government should be in it. And I know that, as a fact, it did play a role in holding me back from any leadership I could have taken in the Congress.

The other thing is—{laughter} it's a funny thing. It was like a black mark, always, against me. And when I stopped to think, "Okay, I have to sort this out. We are going to make a choice on this third-term abortion issue. And I need to think about that."

Now, I had five pregnancies in six-and-a-half years. I know what it is to be pregnant. I know what it is to carry a child to term and raise a child. And I was 58 when I first ran for Congress, so I was no spring chicken on this whole thing. And I just really began to think, "What do I do, and how do I do it, and what is the reality for people?" And I decided that I would vote—I would change one of my votes, and that being the one on third term, because I feel, again, it might be medically necessary, but by third term, you know you're pregnant. You know that you're pregnant. You've felt life in your womb. And I began to feel that's—this would be wrong to willy-nilly say, "Okay, blank check on abortion. Just do whatever you want." I didn't think that was right. I thought there should be some rational reason for someone to essentially take what is a live fetus from the womb. So, I changed my vote.

At that point, I experienced such anger on the part of the pro-choice community, and, by the way, because I was in my second term, they were not

very supportive to begin with, when I ran the second time. But that really had nothing to do with my choice. My choice was one that I thought through myself as—made a decision about, and I voted it. And it was one of those things that I don't regret. But it did play a role, again, in the way people viewed my career in Congress and my candidacy the next time around.

JOHNSON: Well, this certainly is a very divisive issue for women. But one of the things I was wondering about is with the caucus, how did you decide what issues you were going to work on together as an organization?

KELLY: Well, because the legislation was rolling up in front of Congress. Plus there were things that we needed to do. The Violence Against Women Act. Connie Morella had authored the first round, and I was in a position to author the second round, and we did. The things . . . I feel passionate about getting legislation to stop violence against women.

At the time that I was in graduate school, I read a study that indicated that if you include psychological violence, verbal violence, there's violence in one out of four American homes. That's stunning. People are physically violent to their children. They are emotionally violent to their children and their spouses. And it's both men and women.

The other thing you have to remember is I worked for years as a rape crisis counselor in the emergency rooms at St. Luke's Hospital in New York City. I've seen violence against people up close. We all met and felt strongly about that. And we were at loggerheads with a lot of the men.

WASNIEWSKI: Stepping back a bit and just looking at the Women's Caucus and the role that it played in the institution, how would you describe that role, and how significant a role was it?

KELLY: I would say it was not very significant. I would say that we were able—the term that's used now is "bend the curve." I think that we were able to do that, but it was not highly thought of, I think, by even some of the women. And I don't think it was a very significant part of what I did in Congress. Even I don't feel that.

JOHNSON: Was there something else other than the caucus then that might have been more significant in your mind, an opportunity for women to get together or work together on issues that were important to you?

KELLY: Well, you're a woman. You know this as a fact. Women don't really support women very well. They're supportive to a point. But I think that there were times when we would work on pieces of legislation, and if we all thought the same way, that was fine. But it didn't take the Women's Caucus to do that, back when I was there, because we were still working in a pretty bipartisan way, up until, I would say, about the year 2000, 2002. Then things began to change. But up until then . . . I've never felt uncomfortable working, sitting on the Democrat side of the House Floor, working with women. That just was not something that was a problem. And I think most women thought that way.

There are some, there's always someone that's a sycophant for their party. But for the most part, I found the women in the House of Representatives to be smart, and most of them pretty hard-working, unless they came from safe districts. And the people who came from safe districts and had been there a very long period of time really should have been tossed out of office because they did not work, and they really didn't care. They liked the salary, and they liked the prestige. But that's what they were in there for, not the work.

WASNIEWSKI: Speaking of work, we wanted to switch gears and talk about your service on committees. We're about an hour and 10 minutes in, and we probably have another hour's worth of questions. Do you need to take a break or anything, or can we press on?

KELLY: I'm fine, but if you want to take a break, let me know.

WASNIEWSKI: No, we're good. We're good.

KELLY: Okay. I've cleared my calendar, just so you know. I have cleared my calendar, I've turned off anything that might interfere because I did not get down to D.C., and I apologize for that.

WASNIEWSKI: Oh, no. We really appreciate you giving us so much time. Thank you. The committee service—you had touched on this a little bit, about trying to get onto a committee—but can you reflect a little bit on how you received your initial committee assignments? So this would have been Financial Services, Transportation, and then the Small Business Committees. How did that process work?

KELLY: {laughter} There's no reflection needed there at all. We were such a big class that our class standing—these were decisions made by Bill Paxon and his group, that group at the NRCC. They decided our class standing would come by alphabet. If you were at the end of the alphabet, your number was very high. If you're with the first part of the alphabet, your number was very low. So we were alphabetized and numbered, and that was where we started in our class.

The second thing was because we were so big, and everybody went down there saying, "I want to be on Appropriations!" Well, I didn't even know what Appropriations was. But I knew I was a small businesswoman. So I

would say a good third of our class wanted to be on the Small Business Committee because we were all small businesspeople, coming out of our small businesses into Congress. And we really cared about the legislation that the Small Business—we thought—the Small Business Committee could handle and could do for small businesses. And that was very surprising, I think, to Bill Paxon and the people who ultimately decided.

But I got a call from Bill and Susan, and they said, "Here's the committees you're on. We put you on what we think are good for you." And that was the committees I was on. And I was on those committees. I told you, I tried to get off of at least one, if not two, and I wasn't allowed. So I stayed on those committees.

The only other thing was that at one point John Boehner—no, was it John? No. He just ran for President. The governor of Ohio. I am not pulling up his name.

JOHNSON: Kasich? John [Richard] Kasich?

WASNIEWSKI: John—yes, John Kasich?

KELLY: John Kasich. Yes. John—because I was born and brought up in Ohio. I still, at that point, I still do have contacts in Ohio and Michigan—and John called me and said, "Sue, I really want you on my Budget Committee because you care a lot about making sure that we're doing this right," and blah, blah, blah. And my response to him was, "John? I have found out I can't go on your committee. Being a New Yorker, I have to stay on the Financial Services and the Transportation Committee because those are the committees I can raise money on. I have to raise a lot of money to run. I'd love to be on your committee, I'll work with you, but I can't do it." That's the only shot I had at getting off of or changing committees.

JOHNSON: We have questions about each one of the committees that you served on. We just wanted to start with Banking and Financial Services.

KELLY: Okay.

JOHNSON: So when you first joined, there was only one other Republican woman on the committee at the time. So we were wondering about the welcome that you received since this was a mostly male committee.

KELLY: Was that Marge [Margaret Scafati] Roukema?

JOHNSON: Yes, it was.

KELLY: Yes. I did, you know, it's funny. There were a lot of Democrat women. [Sentence redacted.] But I didn't realize I was the only woman. {laughter} You just told me something about my own career. I don't know. It never was a problem. It was never . . . being a businesswoman, I was used to dealing with men, and it just never—being a woman carried no weight one way or the other.

JOHNSON: Marge Roukema went on to serve as vice chair of the committee, and since she had been there before you came on, we were wondering if she offered any advice or if you had the opportunity to work closely with her.

KELLY: Marge was an interesting person. {laughter} She was vice chairman because Newt believed in putting people—women—moving women up. And that's how she became vice chairman. But when the time came, and they had the opportunity, she was the next in line to be the chairman. That's when they said, "No, no, no, we can't do that. She cannot carry that." So, they changed the way the committee was set up, and lo and behold, Marge was not there. Mike [Michael Garver] Oxley was.

JOHNSON: Was that because she was a woman, or do you think there was another reason?

KELLY: No. It had nothing to do with her being—it had a lot to do with her doing her homework and being involved in the issues of finance. I'm saying that's my judgment. I don't know what they thought, but I know that they didn't feel like she could carry the committee, so they didn't put her on. [Sentence redacted.]

WASNIEWSKI: What were your impressions of the first chairman you served with, Jim [James Albert Smith] Leach, and then also you mentioned Mike Oxley? How would you describe their leadership styles?

KELLY: Jim Leach was a passive leader. And I think he's very bright. I think he did a reasonably decent job. But there were things that happened when I was on the committee with Jim, decisions he made that really made me angry.

WASNIEWSKI: Anything in particular, the way the committee was . . .

KELLY: Oh, yes, one in particular. We did the first Whitewater hearings. Back in 1989, the Democrats began to investigate the Whitewater and the Madison Guaranty and Castle Grande problems in Alabama—I'm sorry, in Arkansas. They were investigating Bill and Hillary [Rodham] Clinton, and that was back in 1989. That was long before the Republican Revolution in '94. Henry B. González was chairman of the [Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs] Committee, and he had begun deep work and investigations about what was going on. You may remember the Charles Keating scandal, all these banks that were the savings and loans that were going bankrupt. Keating was part of a big group of people who basically went bankrupt. And then . . . hang on a second. I'm picking up a book I have because I wanted to remember this man's name. Madison Guaranty was started by Susan and Bill—I mean,

Susan and Jim McDougal. And Jim McDougal had gone bankrupt with Madison Guaranty.

One of the things that the Democrats did was appoint a special prosecutor. His name was Robert B. Fiske. And Robert Fiske, in his discovery of the Madison Guaranty situation, discovered that in 1994, in the fall and winter of 1994, he discovered that the Clintons were involved in a money scandal that had helped to bring down—one of the things that had helped to bring down Madison Guaranty. He swore out eight criminal indictments against the four, those four—Bill and Hillary Clinton, and Susan and Jim McDougal. But then came in 1995. The Republicans took over, and they felt that Fiske was not going—because he had been appointed by a Democrat—that he was not going to pursue these things. And they put Ken Starr in. Well, we all know what happened there.

But while we were investigating in that first year, in 1995, that summer, Jim Leach made the decision for us to do more deep discovery on Whitewater. So I spent the first two weeks or three weeks of August in Washington, D.C. We were having hearings on Whitewater. That was okay with me because I was learning the legislative process, and I needed all of the information I could get and all the understanding of it. So it didn't bother me to be down there. But what bothered me was all of the indications were that we were looking for missing files for a number of things that were tied into this. And the files were nowhere to be seen. I went to Jim, and I said to him, "It appears to me that Hillary Clinton is guilty in this. There's too many ties here. Why don't you call her? Why don't you get her in here to testify?"

Now, we had heard Webb Hubbell. He came in in leg irons. And we had heard a lot of other people. And I didn't see any reason that if she was involved in all of these things, even if we didn't have the files, I thought she

would come in, and they could get her to come in and testify. And Jim Leach said, "Oh, we can't do that. She's the First Lady. But the second reason is the Senate's going to pick this up. They're going to take a look at it. So when they take a look at it, then I believe that Alfonse [Marcello] D'Amato and his crowd will take care of it over there."

I was very angry at that decision because every bit of evidence that we had, every bit of these huge mounds of testimony that I had read, indicated that Hillary Clinton was guilty of being—at least she was deeply involved in all of this. And from that point on, I never respected Jim Leach because I felt he was being political instead of straightforward and trying to find out what the truth was. That's why I read all—went over and read all the redacted material and read the entire cases on—when we wound up with impeachment.

WASNIEWSKI: How did the committee operate under Chairman Oxley?

KELLY: Ox had a very different style. Ox's focus—he loved sports, and he was always using sports analogies and so on. But he was very energetic. And I think Ox kind of let things run. He certainly let me have free rein when I was doing all the investigating on terrorism money transfers. I liked him. I thought he was working hard, pushing that committee to do a lot of things that maybe we wouldn't have otherwise. Certainly we would not have under Jim. I think Jim Leach just got tired.

JOHNSON: I wanted to switch the focus back to your career specifically. You had the opportunity to chair the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

KELLY: Well, you know why I had that committee? Because I was set up to be the chairman of Small Business. If you notice, under Denny Hastert [as Speaker of the House], there were no women chairmen of committees. He was not Newt Gingrich. And I had been set up by Newt to be the chairman of Small

Business. As a matter of fact, Jim [James Matthes] Talent, the chairman, was out running for Senate, and I was vice chairman of the committee. He said, "Run the committee. You're going to do it anyway." So I did. But when we had the conference, and Denny was handing out committee chairmanships, I was not the committee chairman. It stunned the entire . . . a lot of the lobbyists were stunned. It stunned me because I had been told that I was going to be doing it and had prepared to do it.

JOHNSON: Did he meet with you beforehand to let you know?

KELLY: No. Not at all. I went into a back room in front of the conference like everybody else did, and when I came out of there, I was stunned. He had given it to a man who had never shown up for the committee, but the man was from Illinois. And Don [Donald A. Manzullo] was not himself a small businessperson. I don't think he really cared about it. But he was from Illinois, and Denny had just decided he was going to do something for Illinois, and that meant Don got the chairmanship. So, as a swap for that, they told Oxley he had to make me vice chairman. Look. I'm being very frank here, because if I think if anybody's going back and taking a look at how Congress operated then, people should know the truth. If you don't want me to be that {laughter} brutally honest, I won't. I'll watch what I say.

JOHNSON: No, no. We want you to answer these questions in any way you want. We're asking them so this is your opportunity to share your opinions and to share exactly what happened in your career. With that subcommittee that you had the chance to lead, how would you describe your own leadership style because this is your chance to lead the subcommittee?

KELLY: Well, my leadership style generally is to hire the smartest people I can, ask them questions, and let them help me do the right research so I know what

I'm talking about. Every single time I held a hearing, I had read every piece of the material that had all of the testimony. I used to go home with huge binders full of testimony that was going to occur before a committee. I read it all. I developed my own questions. I worked very closely with a really wonderful staffer, but basically that was the way I ran my committee. Then my wonderful staffer was purloined by Elizabeth [Hanford] Dole, and he went off and became her legislative director. And I had another staffer who was very bright, and I was able to work with him pretty well, too.

WASNIEWSKI: As a result of a number of high-profile scandals, corporate accountability became a major issue while you were in Congress. And we're curious to know what your role was in drafting and helping to pass [Paul Spyros] Sarbanes–Oxley—what became known as Sarbanes–Oxley—and were you happy with the final version of the bill?

KELLY: Not happy at all. I think Paul Sarbanes put some stuff in there that I really wasn't happy about. PCAOB [Public Company Accounting Oversight Board]—that was supposed to be temporary. It's a permanent thing now. And it's wrong. We need to pull a lot of legislative overreach down. It needs to come out of the federal legal system. There are things that I thought were good, but SOX [Sarbanes–Oxley] in general meant that instead of the bank inspectors sitting in a small community bank, they would drop in for a week every three or four years. Even the small community banks finally had to set aside offices for these bank inspectors. And they move in. It's something people don't understand. The overhead a bank has for all these federal inspectors to come in and do things that are petty, as far as I'm concerned, in terms of running a bank. A bank's a business. The business oversight in some of these things I really strongly disagreed with.

Now there are some things that we did in the—I believe it was SOX—where we did some non-bank things that really kind of helped people reach out and get into the banking system. Like, if I remember correctly, there was something that actually sort of helped Walmart and people like that set up banks—what essentially were banks. I'm trying to think what it was. It had to do with money transfer and stuff. I'm sorry. That's wrong. I'm sure it wasn't that. I have to go back and stop and think what because I did so much stuff.

WASNIEWSKI: Sure. Well, this could be something that you add into the transcript.

KELLY: Yes. SOX—the PCAOB is what I most disagree with because it hit the small and mid-sized corporations. It's got negative consequences all over the place, and it raised the cost of doing business. And as a result, businesses passed this on to consumers. A lot of what went on in SOX, I voted for it because I was on the committee, and I had to support Ox[ley]. I really had no choice. But I wasn't happy about it.

JOHNSON: We wanted to switch to your service on the Small Business Committee. You had mentioned this earlier about Jan Meyers, and how when you first came in, she was the chairwoman of the committee, which certainly was unusual to have a woman chair at that point.

KELLY: She was the first Republican, I believe, chairwoman—if not, she was the first in 40 years—of any woman in the House to be a chairman of a committee.

JOHNSON: What do you remember? How would you describe her leadership style of the committee?

KELLY: Jan was pretty relaxed. She had a terrific staffer who basically ran the committee, and he did a bang-up job. She was relaxed enough to let him do it. He knew all kinds of things and ways to help, and, actually, he helped me

write the most significant legislation—not the most, but one of the really significant pieces of legislation that I did write. We called it NARAB [National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers], which was a way to try to get insurance—because insurance brokers and agents are small businesspeople. They're small businesses. And so we wrote this NARAB bill to help force them to oversee the situation with regard to intra-state insurance. And that bill {laughter} was reauthorized twice.

And the ultimate goal of it has—I think this year the Senate has or will pass it into its full fruition. But what it did was basically allow the insurance agents and brokers to, state by state, accept licensure so that if you sold insurance in New York State—for instance, if you sold medical insurance in New York State, and you went skiing in Colorado and broke your leg, your medical insurance from New York State could not be used in Colorado. A lot of insurance companies were restricted like that, and the only way that a person who was offering that insurance could get that to apply in Colorado was to go to Colorado, spend a week at the University of Colorado taking courses on Colorado insurance law, and then take a test. And if you passed the test, you could be certified in Colorado. So agents and brokers were going all around the country doing all these things. And some {laughter} of the states would require that you filed your request on pink paper, and another you had to staple the pages together, another you had to have a big paperclip. It was just that states were trying to keep the monies from licensure within their state.

So I wrote the bill so that the state could keep the money, but the requirements that the state was requiring did not exist. Instead, this national coalition of agents and brokers would sit down and write a basic test, much in the same way that there's a generalized law test, a generalized medical test

for all states. And we did this so that the insurance companies themselves would be able to write what they felt was a fair test, and then if you passed the test, all the states that had worked on it were willing to accept this test as the test for licensure in their state. Then you could get a license and sell insurance that was applicable in all the states.

It turned out we had a lot of opposition from a couple of Senators, one in particular. We went around him and got it done anyway. We passed it. And we wound up—we were amazed because so many states decided they would join. As long as they could keep the money, they didn't care about the licensure, really. So we got people licensed, and people have much better insurance coverage because of it.

JOHNSON: Sounds like a lot of work that you put in.

KELLY: It was years! Yes. It was years. Good legislation, if it's good legislation, you hang with it. Eventually it's going to emerge. I was flattered that after I left the Financial Services Committee, one of the first hearings that Barney Frank {laughter} held was on a piece of legislation of mine that he apparently said, "This lady who's no longer with us has this legislation, and it's good legislation, and so we're going to do it." And they did.

WASNIEWSKI: {laughter} A nice compliment.

KELLY: Sorry?

WASNIEWSKI: I said, "A nice compliment."

KELLY: Well, it is, and it isn't. It's sad that it takes so long to get anything through Congress. This is the operation part of Congress that most individuals in the United States have no idea, they have no understanding of. I listen to people

as they run for office for Congress now, and they make vast promises. Presidentials and Senators—presidential candidates and the senatorial candidates do the same thing. They make these vast promises. And I know, listening to them, it's impossible for them to achieve what they think they're going to do. I know for a fact {laughter} that you can't do certain things because of the speed with which Congress works. And the legislative process was set up to do that. That's why I'm glad I got at least some pieces of significant legislation passed.

WASNIEWSKI: On Small Business, you also chaired the Regulatory Reform Subcommittee. It was the 105th, 106th Congresses [1997–2001]. Can you talk a little bit about that experience? How did it compare with your subcommittee chairmanship on Financial Services?

KELLY: Well, because, again, with Jan and subsequent chairmen, because people considered the Small Business Committee to be sort of a third tier, nobody cared. And so you could kind of do what you wanted to do. And we wrote legislation. We worked hard to kind of reduce the amount of paperwork. The amount of paperwork that small businesses and mid-sized businesses have to file with the federal government and state governments is enormous. It's just way too much. And we've tried to just reduce that amount.

JOHNSON: You also had the chance to serve on the Transportation Committee.

KELLY: {laughter} Yes. That was fun.

JOHNSON: Can you talk a little bit about that experience and how that committee differed from the other two that you served on?

KELLY: Well, Transportation was also Infrastructure. I love railroads. And the first committee chairman I served with on Transportation was an old railroad

man himself, Bud [E. G.] Shuster. We got along famously. He made me vice chairman of the Rail Subcommittee. We had a ball. I learned so much about how things work, and we did a lot of things. I would say that out of that committee, more than Financial Services, obviously more than Small Business, out of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, we actually did a lot of things. We authorized a lot of money because of the T—the TEA—that has to be reauthorized about every six or eight years. But we took a look at how things worked and what needed support and so forth, both with the infrastructure: bridges and roads, post offices. It's a marvelous committee. I loved it. And I had a wonderful time both with Bud Shuster and John [L.] Mica. They were both very good chairmen.

JOHNSON: And you mentioned that Railroads Subcommittee, and we saw that Susan Molinari chaired that. What were your impressions of her and also how she led her subcommittee?

KELLY: I liked Susan a lot. I think she was a smart person who was really trying her best to do a good legislative job. And she had a very good staffer on that committee. He'd been there for a long time, and he really knew what he was doing. And he helped Susan. Remember, a lot of these staffers were the minority staffers for 40 years. Some of them—I think one of her staffers, if I remember correctly, had been a minority staffer for something like 15 years. So he knew where all the bodies were buried, and he knew where all the good stuff was, and he went for it. And she let him. She had ideas too because in New York, transportation is critical. If you're from anywhere in New York, near New York City, transportation is key.

WASNIEWSKI: Here's a question, to kind of step back and look at your service on all the committees: how important do you think it was to have a women's

perspective on these committees, and do you think Congresswomen bring something different to hearings and debates?

KELLY: I can tell you that I believe that Congresswomen are essential to the furthering of legislation on Capitol Hill. I believe that Congresswomen—I know for a fact that if you're talking legislation, that women leave their ego at the door. I know this because I've seen it happen. It's not about ego; it's about getting it right. Women do that. They have that capacity. Most women seem to have that capacity, at any rate, and the ones I worked with seemed to do that. It wasn't about furthering themselves; it was about getting it done, getting it done right.

And I think that women push. They will push the men sometimes, while other men will not push maybe as hard. And the reason for that is that women have—most of the time—even with Nancy Pelosi as the House Speaker [2007–2011], Nancy was respected and treated with deference as the Speaker. But when I was in Congress, it was men. And the men were treated with great deference, especially by the other men. The women, they had nothing to lose by challenging leadership, nothing at all to lose by challenging the leadership and saying, "We think this should be done. Let's get it done." Or, "We think this is wrong. Let's don't do it." I've watched women manipulate the situation in a way where they just got stuff done.

And I think the presence of women on Capitol Hill needs to be increased, not decreased. I'm very concerned that the presence of Republican women is so small.

WASNIEWSKI: Was there a—you mentioned women . . .

KELLY: Can I qualify that for one minute?

WASNIEWSKI: Absolutely.

KELLY: What I want to say is not, I say that not because I'm a Republican and that's a political comment; I say that because I believe in balance. I believe that the best thing New York ever had going for it when I first was elected was that we had Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Democrat, and Alfonse D'Amato, a Republican, in the Senate. And we had more Democrats in the House than Republicans, but we had a pretty, it was much more balanced, much more balanced. And it inured greatly, to the benefit of New York State. We got things done for New York. It was good for the state. I think without the House having that kind of balance, between Republicans and Democrats, nothing gets passed, and I think that's what you're seeing. It's both sides of the aisle that are guilty of it.

WASNIEWSKI: You had mentioned a minute ago the capacity of women to challenge leadership, sometimes because they had nothing to lose. Is there any example that you have in the back of your mind from your career?

KELLY: I'm trying to remember if—well, one was VAWA, Violence Against Women Act. Connie [Morella] worked heavily with the Democrat women to get that passed. And when I was the chair, when I was running that legislation, I worked heavily with the Democrat women, and we both really had to push. It was hard. The men don't think it's important, I think. I watched Jennifer Dunn get into a real argument with Newt about that. And Connie was more soft-spoken, but Connie has such courage. I really grew to admire her enormously because she's so courageous. And it's because she simply felt she had nothing to lose. She was going to get this bill done. And she was going to help me get it reauthorized. So we did.

JOHNSON: We've certainly heard a lot of really great instances of women that we've interviewed saying how they have worked together across the aisle, or within their own party, just like what you had mentioned. One thing we wanted to ask—we're nearing the end, so hope you have a little bit more time for us.

KELLY: I'm fine. I'm fine.

JOHNSON: Okay. You've talked about Newt Gingrich and Dennis Hastert a little bit more in passing. But if you can just take a moment to describe and compare their leadership of the House, since these were the two Speakers that you worked for during your congressional tenure.

KELLY: Well, it was interesting to watch the progression with Newt from being just so thrilled he was emotionally involved and, unfortunately, would cry. He and Boehner both cried all the time. But he was just so thrilled to be the Speaker and be in charge. It wasn't he personally when he first started. It wasn't just that he was the Speaker; it was that the Republican Party at last had a chance to try to get their legislation passed, after all those years. He was thrilled, and he worked hard. And as things began to dawn on him, and things, certain things, of course—he was up against Bill Clinton in the White House. And as he would go down to the White House, we watched him go down, first being strong and discussing things with the White House and saying, "This is what Congress is going to do. We are going to do this, whether you like it or not."

And an example of that is the welfare bill. We passed the welfare bill, and the White House didn't like it. Clinton didn't like it. He vetoed it. Newt went down and argued that bill hard. He said, "It's gone. We are going to do it. We can make some—we'll make a few changes if you need them, but we are going to pass welfare." So he brought it back to the Hill, and he fought for

that bill. And we passed it again. And Clinton vetoed it again. And so the third time, when Newt went down to the White House, he said to Bill Clinton, "We are going to pass this again. And we'll pass it as many times as we have to until it becomes law." With that, Bill Clinton and his advisors—and I think you'll find people have written about this situation that will confirm what I'm saying—they said, "We're going to have to make one or two changes, but we're going to have to let this bill go." So that's exactly what happened. It was because Newt fought, and other—Newt, along—he took people with him. But basically he was the point man on it.

And that was the last time. Somehow, every time after that, he would go down to the White House, and Bill Clinton would roll him. And it happened over and over and over again, until finally, in conference one day, somebody, one of the loudmouths from a totally safe district stood up and said, "Newt, what the hell are you doing down there? Sounds like you're in bed with Bill Clinton." And I think that was really what started the deal with Newt. He became increasingly resistant. I think he was awfully tired of this. People have no idea how hard these jobs are. Things come at you so fast. It's so much, so fast, it's exhausting. And I think Newt just got tired and behaved very differently, and became arrogant and difficult to work with. And so people said, "You're going to have to step down." He did so, unwillingly, but it was a good thing for the conference that he did.

And then we got Hastert. And everybody wanted Hastert because Hastert was not controversial. I had worked very closely—I knew Denny very, very well because he had chaired the committee that Newt had set up to write the medical legislation. And I liked Denny a lot and his chief of staff, Scott Palmer. The two men were easy to work with and friendly. People liked them. And Denny was calm. His outer appearance was that of an affable

teddy bear, and so even the Democrats weren't upset when Hastert became Speaker.

And then I watched Hastert become corrupted by the Bush White House until he didn't fight for our legislation very much at all. And he made sure that our legislation that got to the floor was exactly what the President wanted. And instead of becoming an affable, easy-to-work-with Speaker, he became increasingly difficult and increasingly kind of angry with the [Republican] Conference and with us as individuals. By the end, when I left Congress, I really didn't like Denny Hastert.

JOHNSON: So in both of those cases that you just described, do you think it was just that the Speakers were getting worn down, in that they were . . .

KELLY: Well, no. We know now what was going on with Denny Hastert. But he made me chairman of the Page Board, and at first, I had a pretty good working relationship with Denny. But he didn't want to work with me at all by the end. He didn't want to work with anybody at all. He was not in good shape. And nobody knew why, but now we do.

WASNIEWSKI: You were a Member of Congress when the September 11th, 2001, terrorist attacks occurred. And we're wondering what it was like for you representing a New York congressional district during that period. You were not far from the city.

KELLY: No. And I lost a lot of friends. I shouldn't say a lot, but I lost a number of friends. And things kept happening—it was horrible. It was really horrible. When the towers went down, nobody knew what to do. I was in my office, and we heard this big boom. And, of course, they're always building something on Capitol Hill. My chief of staff came in and said, "What was that? That was very loud." It was loud. It shook the windows in my office.

And I was in—at that time, I was on the south side of the—no . . . I was in Longworth, and those are old windows. And I thought they were going to break, they shook so hard.

And I said, "Oh, you know, Mike. I think it's probably just—they shot some rock or something." And I paid no attention to it—even though I knew—I had on the television and had watched the second plane fly into the Twin Towers. Never occurred to me that there might be something happening in D.C. and, of course, what that boom was, was the plane hitting the Pentagon. And Mike ran down, and he said, "I'm going to go ask what that was. That's just not normal."

He came back—he came running in the office, and he said, "Get out! Get out! Get out, now! Everybody run. They're after us." I said, "Wait a minute, calm down." He said, "I heard it. I heard it as I got to the guard at the door. On their walkie-talkie, they're evacuating all the buildings. They said, 'Get everybody out! Get everybody out now!'" And I said, "Well, where are we supposed to go? What happens? Where are we going to go? Is there a plan? Did you find anything?" He said, "No! No. We got to go. We got to get out." And I said, "Well, get the staff. Get the staff, get them out. Get them out and tell them we'll all meet out there on the street."

So we all ran out the front door of Longworth Building. And the people were pouring out of every door of every building. The Capitol Dome was—everybody was running. And they were just running, willy-nilly, all over Capitol Hill. And we began to run down the street. And finally, I stopped and grabbed my staff together and said, "Guys, where are we going to go? We have to plan. We can't just run all the way out of Washington, D.C." And Mike said, "Listen, the next plane that's coming is going to hit the Capitol Dome." And he said, "We got to get out of here." I said, "Well, where do we

go? I don't know this area." And I never did get to know. All I ever did when I went to Washington was I flew into Reagan National, got to my office, did my job, and flew home. I really was never a tourist in Washington.

At any rate, Mike said, "We're going to my mom's house." And we were able, fortunately, to flag two empty cabs, pile the staff sitting on everybody's laps. Fortunately, I picked up my purse. I'd guaranteed the cabbie a lot of money if they'd just take all of us. And we stuffed those two cabs and drove out to Mike's mother's house in Maryland. And she didn't know we were coming; we just arrived. That nice lady went out and got food and gave us all sandwiches, and we sat on Mike's mother's and dad's back porch, watching airplanes—F-16s, helicopters, all kinds of things—circling back and forth. We were in the flight pattern. Wow! The place was heavy with air artillery.

And, of course, the subways shut down, the roads shut down, everything. I kept trying to call the Capitol to see what was happening for those of us who were elected. I felt my place was to go wherever we could. We had to have the government function. Finally, late afternoon, I got hold of an operator, and she said—I think it must have been, like, 6:00 or 7:00 at night—there was going to be a meeting in the top floor of the police station, the Capitol Police Station, on Capitol Hill, which is a separate building down behind the Senate. And I said, "Well, how do I get there?" She said, "Well, they're opening subways. What subway line are you on?" I found that out, and she said, "That one will be open. They will only allow people with Capitol Hill credentials on the train. It's a free ride in. Don't worry about it if you don't have money."

So I went. Mike dropped me off at the railhead. I got on the subway, showed them my credentials, and got off the subway and walked up and went—then, because it was quite late, I went directly to the police station and up. A lot of

people by then who lived in Maryland and Delaware and Pennsylvania—local, you know, people who essentially could drive home in an hour or two—had gotten their cars and driven home. So there were not that many of us left, but there were a number of Senators and Congressmen, and we were all crammed into one room, sitting on desks and on the floor. Finally, the police chief came in and began to talk and tell us what they knew and sent us home. But we decided we would open—those of us that were still there, we would open government because we didn't want terrorism or anyone to think that the U.S. government could be cowed by such violent acts.

And so that's what we did. We opened, we said the pledge, said a prayer, and I don't know what else. Then we gaveled down, and all of us walked together out of the door. The Senate came over to the House steps with us. We held hands. We held a press conference with all of us that were there, standing on those steps. And then we held hands, and we sang, "God Bless America." It was a moment that I just couldn't believe that we were all still there and all caring that much, but it was wonderful to see. There must have been 300 of us, at least, that were there.

And then we went to our apartments. And the next day I tried to get home, and when I got up as far as Newark, New Jersey, all the trains north were stopped there. There were no trains into the city. The roads through New York were all closed, but I could see across the Hudson River how bad it was with the towers. And that's when the real work began because not only did I lose friends, but it was going to require an enormous input of federal funding to try to put New York City back together. And so that was interesting too, because about two weeks into it, I got a call from Hal [Harold Dallas] Rogers' staff. Hal was the chairman of the Appropriations Committee for the Transportation.[2]

And I was on that Transportation Committee. So Hal decided we would go into New York and go down in the subway system under the burning towers as far as we could go to examine the situation and see how much damage there was and kind of try to figure out what was going on.

That trip in—we went in by—I went in—you could only get in to a certain—New York City—up to a certain point. After that you had to go down by boat. We went down on a Coast Guard tug, and they dropped us off at the World Yacht Basin. We walked up through ashes that were shin-high, and as I walked, I kept thinking, "These could be my friends that are down here I'm walking around on." It was a horrible feeling. And the smell of the burning building, the sound of the building itself—the building was groaning as things would settle and move, you could hear these screeches and screams and groans coming out of the pit.

And we walked down handmade ladders all the way down, level after level, to the bottom of the subway; I think it was the Chambers Street Station. And walked up the—MTA [Metropolitan Transportation Authority] had rigged generators with a string of single bulbs up, and we literally walked up to a point where one of the girders that had come falling out of the Trade Center had fallen and stabbed down through the street, all the way down to the bottom of the subway. And it was sticking out there, and there were ashes and all kinds of things. I picked up a page from a contract, a Blue Cross Blue Shield contract, medical contract, from some family. Blue Cross Blue Shield had had a lot of offices in one of the Trade Towers. At any rate, we walked back out, and that experience was really unbelievable.

But we committed. Hal and I talked; our staff talked. We committed to doing what we could to try to clean up the transportation mess of New York City at that point. The concern was that if that girder, or others like it, had

broken the big heavy walls that they had built around the Trade Towers to keep water from the tidal system of the Hudson—keep water out of it—the concern was if that had been broken, and water flooded into the subway system where we were, that it would short out the entire subway system for the lower part of New York City. We had to stop that from happening. It was an emergency situation. But we went back, and we were able—fortunately, at that point, it was a very bipartisan Congress—and we could get the job done.

WASNIEWSKI: Yes. A tremendous amount of work, having to reconstruct the city. Just one quick question. How many of your constituents were lost in the attacks?

KELLY: Honestly, I don't know, because I really can't tell you what the final count was. I never really saw it. I think maybe about 100, and maybe 143 is the number that pops in my brain, but that may not be accurate at all. I lost a lot of other friends. The husband of the mayor of Poughkeepsie, New York never came home that night. And Juan [Lafuente] has never been found. They never found a trace of him. But now they think he was in the tower and went down with the towers. Someone was offering a free breakfast for an accountancy firm that he was in, and they think he went up for the breakfast in the tower. I lost other friends that were working there. Some have been found, and a couple of them, there's no trace. They're just gone.

JOHNSON: We conducted a series of interviews for the 10th anniversary of the attacks and certainly heard a lot of very similar stories, heartbreaking stories. But I think the one thing that you touched upon was the bipartisanship. A lot of people said that Congress really rose to the occasion and worked together.

KELLY: Yes, we did. We really did because we understood that we needed to act as a unit to try to put in place the things to keep America safe, which we did not have at that time.

JOHNSON: I know we're running short on time, so we just wanted to wrap up with a few questions. One of the things was women's health, was a major focus for your legislative career in the House. Can you explain why that was so important to you?

KELLY: Well, if you look at my background, you know that I'm a professional patient advocate, that I worked in emergency rooms in New York City, and that I was a trained rape crisis counselor as well as certified as a nursing home ombudsman for the state of New York. I had done a lot of medical work in addition to that. My first job out of college was doing blood research for Harvard, and my dad was a doctor. So I had a deep medical background to begin with. One of the bills I'm still really proud of getting passed was the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act, because that became law here in New York State, and it became law so that women could get breast reconstructive surgery at the time they had their breasts removed because of cancer. That sort of thing is so important, and I'm happy that I was able to do anything like that.

JOHNSON: Where did the idea for that legislation originate? Was that from constituents? Women Members? Was there a personal connection for that?

KELLY: Well, the personal connection is my sister, who came into my office the day I was sworn in to office to tell me that she had a metastasized breast cancer and was being operated on the next day. She hadn't mentioned it until then. She said, "I didn't want to worry you." So yes, there was the personal connection,

big time. But also, I think that there were other people who knew I had this medical background and talked with me about it.

And, of course, Alfonse D'Amato was there. And Alfonse D'Amato wanted to do something about breast cancer for women. So we did it. And I was able—because he had a working relationship, a good working relationship, with Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Moynihan had been in the same fraternity as my husband. So it was kind of a fun thing to meet him when he was a Senator. He was a good Senator and not very partisan. And Alfonse was pretty much non-partisan when he was there. So they worked very closely, and that's how that legislation got passed.

WASNIEWSKI: Because there were so few women in Congress at the time that you served, did you feel that you not only represented your constituents in your New York district, but also women across the country and perhaps even globally?

KELLY: You know, I never felt that. What I had realized since I've been in office is that my run, {laughter} and the fact that I got successfully elected, has inspired a lot of women in various ways, surprisingly, that I've heard from. I would say, at least, as far out as the Mississippi {laughter} River. I never thought about that when I ran. As a matter of fact, I wasn't thinking gender at all when I ran. I was just angry at the Republican Party, and I was thinking that we needed to get better legislation. We needed to do something about the economy. They were much broader issues.

But the fact that I was successful has made a difference to some women. I was stunned the other day when I went into a town hall, and a woman came up to me, and she just walked up and put her arms around me and gave me a hug. And she said, "I am so glad to see you. I want to tell you, if you hadn't run, I never would be here, and here I am. I am now the supervisor of the

town!" She said, "I watched how you did it, and I thought I could do it, too." And I said, "Oh, Barbara, I'm so glad for you!" But I didn't even really—{laughter} I hadn't thought about my being any kind of a talisman. That wasn't why I ran. It wasn't because I was a woman. It was because I cared. And I think that's one of the unique things about women. I think women get sometimes pretty passionate about issues. They care.

JOHNSON: For women who might come to you, and perhaps this has happened already, and they want to run for Congress, what advice would you offer them?

KELLY: Oh, actually, one did come to me, and I helped her, and she was a Congresswoman for one term from this district.

JOHNSON: What did you say to her when she first came to you?

KELLY: I said to her, "Do you have any idea how difficult this job really is, and what it's going to do to your family?" I didn't know—that's something I didn't know would happen. When I went into Congress, I was just thinking about doing the job. But during the time I was in Congress, I had seven grandchildren born, and two kids got married, and seven grandchildren got born. So, I was there for 12 years. {laughter} And my mother-in-law died. There were all kinds of things. Life goes on in your life, your private life.

One of the things I've found here, at least, in New York—the papers excoriated me for taking time out for my mother-in-law's funeral. I was command central for the family. Everybody coming in from all around the world came here, to my house. And I had to be here. I think family is probably the top priority. And you need to know that it's going to affect your family, if you are in Congress, because Congress eats up so much of your time if you do the job right.

You have to know your constituents. The day after I was elected, I said to Ed, "Oh my God, how do I get to know 658,000 people? Those are the people I have to know what they want in order to do this job." Well, I found out how to do the job, and it's really the same way I was campaigning. I just walked down the street, talked to people, and listened. But that's what I said to her. I said, "You've got to understand. Go back and talk to your family. Tell them, 'Goodbye. I'm going to be essentially absent from your life for a few years while I do this job.'"

One funny thing: I was in a conference with Newt and—I forget who all, I think Newt and Tom. It might have been the leadership—we were having some kind of a small conference over some issue. And I got called to the phone. We didn't have cell phones even then. And I got called to the phone. I went, picked it up. It was only one phone in that small office where we were. And it was my husband. And I said, "What's happened?" immediately worrying about my children, and he said, "I don't know where you put the skillet. How do you make that chicken that you make?" {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: That is a great story.

KELLY: It's the impact on your family that I first tell people to look at. Second thing is go out and raise money. If you don't have money in your pocket, go get it. You'll never win without it. It's sad, but that's true.

WASNIEWSKI: You've mentioned your husband a number of times. How involved was he in campaigning with you?

KELLY: Well, it's an interesting thing you ask that. At first he was pretty involved. He went with me. I knew I had to do things that were very—just counterintuitive. We had an old camper. It was 1983 family RV. So we rigged it with outdoor speakers, and I had tapes of John Philip Sousa

marches. And we would drive that old camper—we slung banners, "Sue Kelly for Congress," all over it, and we would drive it into a village. And I'd get out, walk and talk, and because we played music as we drove through the village, people would look up and see my name. We drove all over. We put over 100,000 miles on that old RV. {laughter} It served me very well.

And he was with me, doing things like that. And he helped me raise money because being a male businessman he was able to open contacts that I would not have had. That's one of the things you should actually ask people—women—that you're interviewing. I have found that while a man would write me a—understand that I needed the money to run, and if he could afford it, would write me a decent check, say a check of $50. A woman would say, "Oh, I want to donate to your campaign," and write a check for $5 or $10. Not because they didn't have money, but because they thought that was a big donation. Women I don't think are—some of them, anyway; the ones who are my friends—didn't seem to understand how essential money is to politics these days. And I don't know if other women had that problem, but I certainly did.

WASNIEWSKI: Did you feel you became better over time asking for money? We've heard that from other women we've interviewed.

KELLY: Oh, yes. I did. You learn a pattern, and you learn . . . it's really horrible, when you stop and think about it. What you learn to do is manipulate people. That's what I never—I didn't know that, when I first ran. I didn't know that I was going to have to figure out a way to manipulate people into believing as I believed and donating money.

WASNIEWSKI: That's a hard skill to acquire, {laughter} if you want to call it a skill.

KELLY: Well, but you learn it. Otherwise you won't raise money, and you won't be in.

WASNIEWSKI: Yes. We just have a few retrospective questions to ask and, again, appreciate you spending so much time with us. This has been fantastic. We've asked each of the Members about their first and last campaigns, and we want to ask you about your memories of 2006, which was a tough election.

KELLY: Oh, {laughter} that was vicious. That was pretty vicious. I ran, but I could tell that there were things, that something had changed in the district. It was going south, anyway. I kind of knew that it was. Because I could see, when I would go into a place and start walking around and shaking hands and talking to people, I could see that the reception was not as open. They were friendly, but it wasn't as open as it had been. And I kept—because I was stuck in D.C. I was chairing that committee, doing all these hearings, running around trying to track the terrorism money and dry up the things that they were doing to support terrorism financially all over the world. And I was really busy doing that, but I was also on these three committees, and there were the demands on my time were enormous. But I was up here every single weekend doing things.

What I noticed was the invitations were not as numerous. And I called the guy who was my campaign advisor, and I said, "Jay, get over to my office. There's something wrong. I have a feeling that something's wrong. And I'm getting all these nasty newspaper articles. And I want you to go and see." And he lived in the district, so he called me back and said, "I haven't seen anything out of the ordinary." And I thought, "That's really odd."

But that happened several times. And I kept saying to my husband, "I think I'm going to lose this this time. I don't feel the intensity that I felt from the

people. This has always been a two-way street. It's always been pretty intense back-and-forth. I don't get that intensity. People are not inviting me as much. Have you felt anything?" He said, "Sue, you've got to know that, you know full well that you haven't even taken your own hometown in the last two elections. It's gone Democrat." And he said, "I suspect that's what's going on here. There's just now too many Democrats. It's been rolling deeper and deeper into that camp." And I thought, "Well, you know, so be it. Whatever it is, it's going to be." But the night of the election, I said—my son and son-in-law and daughter were here, and I said to them, "Please don't be upset. I believe I'm going to lose. I can feel this. It hasn't felt right for the last three years. Something's going on. I don't know. I have to say, I think, it's President Bush and the war."

I voted for the Iraq War, and I represent West Point. And we—I tell you, some of the hardest things I had to do in Congress were times when I had to pick up the phone and say, "Mr. or Mrs. Jones, are you alone in the house? Because I need to talk with you, but I don't want to talk with you while you're by yourself." And what I needed to tell Mrs. Jones was that I had gotten a message from the War Department saying that their son or daughter was killed in action. These were terrible things to have to do.

And that whole war was pulling down on America as a whole. It pulled me down, I think. But I could tell. I could feel. Unlike that first election when I had nothing to lose. I could have lost the election, but I was having a bang-up time. I was really having a ball. And I was still campaigning, but I have to also say, I was exhausted, just exhausted. And so was my husband. He didn't want any part of it anymore. I could tell. And quite frankly, I think, if I had not lost, my husband might very well have just walked out the door. I think he'd had enough. I think we both did. So it was not a bad thing that I lost.

WASNIEWSKI: I think your points about how the stress that the work level puts on families—yes, is something that a lot of people who aren't part of the institution, they're just not aware of that.

KELLY: No. You know, the other thing is the nastiness of the press. It just got worse and worse. I have a daughter with Crohn's disease. And I was working very carefully with one of the Pennsylvania Senators, Arlen Specter, because he also had a family [member] that had IBD [inflammatory bowel disease]. And so we wrote a bill about infectious bowel diseases and wrote a bill to try to put a little money into the NIH [National Institutes of Health budget] so that they would do some more investigations and deeper work on why people have these terrible bowel diseases.

Well, the paper couldn't get enough of it. They wrote nasty editorial after nasty editorial about how in the world could I worry about bowel movements when I was representing people who, and my district in Congress, people who were worried about international relations, and so on. Well, I represent everybody. They didn't understand that there's a large part of the U.S. population that has problems, and they need help. And we got that—Arlen and I got that money, and it did lead to something—it helped them get a perspective that they didn't have before. So I'm not sad about that. What I'm sad about is the state of journalism that they would assume that it was such a stupid thing to do.

They excoriated me because somebody found me in the all-night supermarket buying food for my husband for the week at 1:45 in the morning. And I was not supposed to be down in the supermarket at 1:45 in the morning. It was a Monday night—or actually Tuesday morning—and I was catching a 7:00 shuttle back down to D.C., but I had to get food in the house for Ed before I flew. And they wrote a nasty article about that. They

wrote one thing after another that—any way they could. They hit me as hard as they could. There's no protection from something like that. It's like, "When did you stop beating your wife?"

JOHNSON: Did you find while you were a Member that the press treated women any differently than men that served in Congress?

KELLY: I certainly did. I think that the women who wrote for the papers, the women I knew, generally were more understanding of the kinds of things that we were doing in Congress and the kinds of things that we would—that I as a woman would say or do than men. There were only a few women that wrote really, really nasty stuff. But it was very hard. People were very angry in 2006. The country was angry in 2006.

It was Christmastime in 2006. I'd cast my last vote in the middle of November, and I was home again in my little village in Katonah, trying to quickly pick up a couple of Christmas presents for my grandchildren. And a man walked up to me and said, "Are you Sue Kelly?" in this angry voice. I looked at him and laughed and said, "I'm not sure." And he said, "Well, I think you are. I want to give you a piece of my mind. But you know what? You lost. As a matter of fact, good. I don't have to do that, do I? You're out. Good." It was Christmastime. Merry Christmas, Sue.

WASNIEWSKI: Yes. Tough—a tough political environment in that year.

KELLY: Yes. And it's like that now, I think, all the time. That's sad.

WASNIEWSKI: I think you're right about that. {laughter} We've asked you a lot of retrospective questions. We want to ask you one where we get you to prognosticate maybe a little bit. There are now 108 women in Congress. There are 88 in the House; there are 20 in the Senate. How many do you

think will be in Congress 50 years from now, on the 150th anniversary of Jeannette Rankin's swearing-in to the House?

KELLY: I would say that there will be more, but I wouldn't give you a number on that. I wish I could. I wish I could say the full half of the House would be women. But we have a lot of women now that people have put in high public office: governors, women who are heads of their state legislatures, mayors—more now than ever before. And that's really where you cut your eyeteeth—most people do, anyway—in those positions. So I would say there's a willingness now to elect women that—much more than there was when I first ran. And I would think in 50—you said 50 years from now or 100?

WASNIEWSKI: Yes, 50 years from now, on the 150th anniversary.

KELLY: Fifty years from now—okay. I would guess that, I would hope that there's double that number in Congress.

JOHNSON: I just have one last question for you. What do you think your lasting legacy will be, in terms of your service in the House?

KELLY: You never know. I do know that NARAB is a lasting legacy. I do know that there are other things that I did, environmental things. The Hudson Highlands never would have gotten passed. The money and the designation of the Hudson Highlands never would have gotten passed had I not been very friendly with the Congressman who was chairman of the committee and was stopping it from going anywhere. I do know that the Child Abuse Act that we started, it's been amplified and amplified, and children are more safe. Or let me put it this way: people are able to be prosecuted for jeopardizing and abusing children in a way. I know that that is a good thing, and I know that it's there, that it—people are safer, safer for that.

I'm thinking about the Terrorism [Risk] Insurance Act. I was one of the authors of that. That made it possible for the federal government to be the insurer of the third resort in the event of a massive terrorist attack. That allowed insurance companies to offer terrorism insurance, up to a certain point, because they knew the federal government was there. So that helped stadiums and colleges and medical facilities and factories. Any big business, it helped them. And it continues to do so.

Those are legacies that I know I got passed, and I know that they have helped, and they go on. I don't care if my name's on them. I never did. But I know that the U.S. is better for some of the stuff that I did. And those are a few.

And then as far as locally, we drive down the road, and my husband and I, we joke about the fact that I was able, because I was on Transportation and Infrastructure—and we were able to earmark, when I was in Congress—we joke about the fact that we're turning on the Sue Kelly memorial turning lanes, {laughter} or we're crossing the Sue Kelly bridge, because {laughter} I was able to help get some of those things done. We got on the train, and the train now goes way north of here, and we call it the Sue Kelly train extension. {laughter} I got a lot of things done that affect many people's lives here in, in the New York area. But they'll never know. I don't care. I got the job done. That's my legacy. Their lives are better.

JOHNSON: I think that's a great place to end the interview, unless Matt, you have something else to ask.

WASNIEWSKI: I had one other question that we've asked people, and that's was there anything unexpected or something that surprised you about your House service, now that you've—you can reflect on it?

KELLY: I hadn't thought about that. The whole thing was such an experience for me. I felt like I was getting a Ph.D. in public policy every two years. I think the thing that surprised me—there were two things. The enormous cost of money to run. That surprised me. And the second thing, the second thing was the vitriol from the media. I hadn't expected that. But it happened all the time, even back with the very first primary. I thought it would end when I won the election. Not a chance.

WASNIEWSKI: Yes, those are two things that have become mainstays in the modern period, for sure. The cost of campaigns and . . .

KELLY: Those things were the things that surprised me most. As far as being on Capitol Hill, I can tell you, doing the job—I loved the job. And I committed a great sin. I fell in love with the district and the people in the district. I loved them.

I think that love was reciprocated in many ways. It keeps popping up, surprising me that people even remember my name. But I'll get a telephone call from somebody; they'll say, "I can't get help anywhere else. Can you help me? I know you used to help people when you were in Congress. Can you give me some help?" And I think, "How do they even know me? I've been out 10 years."

There's some surprising things that happened after. But I loved the job. I loved the people, I loved the district. I'd do it again in a gnat's minute if I didn't have to raise money, and I didn't have to have such nasty people {laughter} working me over in the press.

WASNIEWSKI: Well, we want to thank you so much for spending time talking with us. This has been fantastic.

JOHNSON: Yes, thank you very, very much.

KELLY: Well, I hope Matt that this project works out for you. I think it's a valuable project because hearing it from the horse's mouth, {laughter} so to speak, you're getting different views from all of us. And put together, you're going to have a wonderful perspective from the women of the House, the old women of the House. {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: Well, I know we are. We talk about this a lot as we get ready for these interviews. It's been—they've all been just fantastic. And, yes, many different perspectives. There's not a—it's not a monolithic viewpoint on any issue. And part of the inspiration for this, honestly, was that the Former Members of Congress had done an oral history project in the 1970s, where they interviewed about a hundred Members. And there were a group of about 10 women Members they interviewed, people like Edna [Flannery] Kelly, Martha [Wright] Griffiths. And those interviews were the best of the whole series because women had this fantastic perspective on the institution, at that time, very much being outsiders. And we're kind of getting the same storyline here for women that we've talked to for this project, again, going back to the early 1970s.

KELLY: Yes. I don't think anything really has changed, and I don't think it will change until there's more people in the House. Nancy Pelosi was an aberration. That leadership was an aberration. And quite frankly, I am still in touch with some of the people that are still on Capitol Hill, and I know that there's just still this attitude of "It's a man's world."

JOHNSON: Well, we're doing our best to capture the history of the women that served and are excited about this project and really appreciate you spending time with us today.

KELLY: Well, thank you. I'm sorry it's gone on so long. I hope I didn't just bore you. But I had a different experience than a lot of women.

NOTES

[1] Representative Hamilton Fish, Jr., served in Congress from 1969 to 1995. He declined to seek re-election to the 104th Congress (1995–1997) for health reasons.
[2] Representative Hal Rogers chaired the Transportation Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee during the 107th Congress (2001–2003). He later chaired the Appropriations Committee during the 112th to the 114th Congress (2011–2017).